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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000782

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FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KTFN KISL TIP KU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES RIHS AND TIP WITH THE
MINISTER OF JUSTICE/AWQAF AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

REF: A. KUWAIT 771 B. KUWAIT 700

Classified By: Ambassador Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador discussed the UNSCR 1267 designation of Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) (Ref B) and TIP July 9 with Hussain Nasser Al-Huraiti, the new Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf (religious endowments) and Islamic Affairs. The Minister, a RIHS boardmember, defended the charity, stating that it was funding people in need and not terrorism. Ambassador stressed the importance of having laws that criminalized certain activities such as TIP and terror finance, stating that successful prosecutions under these laws would address many of the USG's concerns. The Minister's promise to press for passage of anti-TIP legislation demonstrates that Kuwait's Tier 3 ranking has galvanized some elements of the GOK to action, in large part to preserve Kuwait's international reputation. The Minister also lauded the work of the Moderation Center and emphasized the Amir's personal interest in the center and its activities. END SUMMARY.

UNSCR 1267 DESIGNEES: RIHS AND BATHALI

¶2. (C) During an introductory meeting July 9 with Hussain Nasser Al-Huraiti, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Ambassador discussed the designation of RIHS, TIP and the Moderation Center. In a cordial and frank exchange, Ambassador highlighted the need for transparency and oversight of RIHS and used the standards that the Kuwait Development Fund employs as an example to emulate. The Minister, who is a RIHS boardmember, defended the charity saying that the money it raised went to people who needed it and was not used for terrorism. Ambassador countered that the USG had evidence indicating funds from RIHS were being siphoned to terrorist organizations such as Lashkar E-Taiba and reaffirmed the need for oversight mechanisms for RIHS.

¶3. (C) The Minister also opined that terrorists "were weaker now because their resources are drying up" in Iraq and elsewhere. When Ambassador remarked on the recent release from custody on bail of UNSCR 1267 designee Mubarak Al-Bathali (Ref A) the Minister dismissed the event saying "he's a crazy person, a nobody, don't worry about him." Ambassador questioned why "crazy nobodies" received front page coverage in the local press.

TIP

¶4. (C) When discussing TIP, Ambassador stressed the importance of having laws that criminalized certain acts including, not only TIP, but also terror finance. Ambassador emphasized that having laws and successfully prosecuting

offenders would address many of the concerns of the USG. The Minister commented that the GOK was making serious efforts to combat TIP and that he, as the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, is pressing for the passage of anti-TIP legislation, demonstrating that Kuwait's Tier 3 ranking has galvanized certain elements of the GOK to take action. The Ambassador acknowledged that we were aware some opposition elements in the Parliament were seeking to use the TIP report as a political stick with which to beat the Government, to which the Minister ruefully smiled. (COMMENT: The Minister's eagerness to tackle TIP is clearly driven by GOK leadership's concern over Kuwait's sullied reputation as a Tier 3 country.

END COMMENT.)

MODERATION CENTER

¶5. (C) The Minister lauded the work of the Moderation Center, which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, saying that it has had "a lot of impact" as it had also evolved in the three years since its creation. He added that the Amir is personally interested in the work of the Moderation Center and recently told him to give priority to the center and its activities. The Minister noted that fighting extremism was a difficult task, one that could not be achieved without the help and support of the international community.

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¶6. (C) Not so subtly underscoring the challenges faced by this government in dealing with Kuwait's new Parliament, the Minister shared with Ambassador that he was meeting that evening with 11 Islamist MPs, whom he referred to as "mullahs" with a twinkle in his eye while making a "beard" gesture with his hand.

BIO NOTE

¶7. (U) Hussain Nasser Al-Huraiti was appointed Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in May 2008. Cordial and sympathetic to the U.S., Al-Huraiti was elected as an independent conservative to Parliament in both 2006 and 2008. He was born in 1962 and received a BA in Law from Kuwait University. Before becoming an MP he served as a judge, a fact to which he made reference several times.

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